

# ADVOCATES

## November is National Adoption Month

*Answering the Call* You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent

By Anne M. Ochylski, RB Coordinator

For many individuals, the month of November signifies the beginning of an increasingly busier holiday season. Calendars across the United States have the fourth Thursday clearly marked as a day for giving thanks and "going home." Holiday shopping begins, and songs start drifting from department store stereos, invoking images of family and friends gathered together in happiness.

For many involved in the child welfare system, the idea of going home for the holidays is fiction--or a future that feels far too distant. However, adoption has provided as many as 175,000 children per year (ADOPTION.COM) with permanent, loving homes to which they can return every holiday and throughout the year.

November is National Adoption Awareness Month. The month recognizes the importance of all issues related to adoption, but centers on the needs of children in the United States foster care system. It began as a week-long effort in Massachusetts to promote the need for adoptive families for children in foster care, and was expanded to a national week-long event during President Gerald Ford's administration. For the past fifteen years, the month has been nationally recognized to increase awareness and promote the positive outcomes of adoption of children in foster care. (ADOPTION.COM)

Local and national events draw attention to the need for adoptive families, and may include recruitment campaigns and the observance of National Adoption Day when a multitude of adoption finalization hearings are held simultaneously nationwide. Adoptions are becoming increasingly more efficient due to the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, signed by President Bill Clinton in 1997. The Act allows children to be considered for adoption within one year of their entry to foster care, and has increased the ease by which children can be safely placed across state lines, provided for economic incentives to adopt, and ensured health coverage for children with special needs in foster care. (ADOPTION.COM, Public Law 105-89 and Public Law/ASFA of 1997)

The SC Foster Care Review Board system affirms the need for permanence and safety for children in foster care. Adoption is one of two truly permanent plans for children in foster care.

Adoption allows children to obtain and maintain the loving relationship with a "forever family." Please contact your regional Adoption Services agency to learn more about adoption recruitment efforts and promotional events, or if you are interested in providing a permanent home for a child.

**1-800-CARE-FOR-US**  
**1-800-227-3487**

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## SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE Division of Foster Care Review

Mark Sanford, Governor

**Volume 19, Issue 2**  
**Fall 2005**



*"There are no unwanted children, only unfound families."*

### Mission Statement:

The Foster Care Review Program provides an external system of accountability and advocacy for children and families involved with the foster care system. The Division utilizes panels of community volunteers to promote safe, permanent homes for children in foster care in a timely manner and to increase public awareness regarding the impact of child abuse and neglect.

## Directly Speaking ... Details From Denise

By Denise Barker, Director

*"When something important is going on, silence is a lie." Dag Hammarskjold*

Summer has passed us by and we now move into the shorter days of fall and winter. It hardly seems possible that it's time for the holidays again. Things, as always, are very busy at the Review Board and I think you will see from this newsletter that we are anxious to share our "busy-ness" with all of you!

The State Board of Directors met in September for a very productive strategic planning session. You will be hearing more about their plans and "next steps" at Chairperson Training and through their personal contacts with you. We have a strong, dynamic Board who are ready to move us forward – I am excited about their leadership.

Last week I traveled to the Oregon Coast to be the keynote speaker at the Oregon Citizen Review Board Annual Conference. I was particularly happy to be included in the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of citizen review in Oregon. What a great group! Their conference, *Celebrating Success – Growing Up Healthy and Safe Together* was a wonderful "event" and I was honored to have the opportunity to share thoughts, concerns and ideas with this dynamic group

of volunteers. I especially want to thank those of you who responded to my e-mail "cry for help" and all your wonderful suggestions about what you would want to hear from a speaker coming from another state. Your ideas were terrific and I used a great deal of what you sent to me – Thanks again!!!

Meeting volunteers and staff from other states who "do" citizen review simply reinforces my strong feeling that we need to be doing more to let those in power know about how valuable this process is and how much we are doing for children and families in communities around the country. Our silence is one of our greatest threats – we must start speaking out about our strengths and our accomplishments. Increased Public Awareness is one of the goals identified by the State Board and by our two Ad Hoc Committees – let's do all we can to make accomplishing those goals a reality by becoming stronger advocates – not just for our children and families – but for our system.

You **are** making a difference – have you told somebody about it today?

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### Staff Happenings!

- **FCRB Staff** donated Target gift cards for two children and their mom who relocated to Columbia from New Orleans.
- **Stephanie Spink**, RB Coordinator for Boards 7A, 7B, 12A, and 12B, is preparing for her social work exam, scheduled for early 2006.
- **Amanda Reich**, RB Coordinator for Boards 3A, 4A, 5E, 11B, and 15A, participated in the Governor's Cup Road Race on Oct. 15th and placed third in her age division.
- **Stephen Clyburn, III**, Program Supervisor, will travel to Mississippi in November to assist individuals and families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

## Strictly by the Board News from the State Board of Directors

By Dot Bailey, State Board of Directors



Pictured: Colleen Bozard, Vernon McCurry,  
Sissy Brock, Anne Thayer, Louise McFarland

Hi everyone, I'm Dorothy "Dot" Bailey of Greenville. I have recently been appointed to the State Foster Care Review Board for the 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. I am much honored to have been asked to serve on the State Board. I have served on my local board since 1999.

Recently, I attended a two day planning session for the State Board. I must admit going into this meeting, having never attended any thing like this before, I had my doubts about how much I could contribute to this process. In a very short time all my doubts were erased. We had a wonderful facilitator. She had the ability to take my nebulous thoughts and put them into coherent words. We

made amazing progress and came up with a very ambitious plan for the next three years. You can expect to hear from your Board as we implement this plan, as we are forming new committees, and will be asking for volunteers to serve on those committees. We need your help to continue to move forward with our mission for our foster children. Remember, we are a voice, I hope a persistent one, for their desire for a permanent home. So, please step up to the plate and join one of our committees. Your State Board can move forward and be successful only with your help. There is power in numbers and we can accomplish a lot for our children with your help.

Hope to see you soon !

Dot

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### State Board Members

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#### Vernon McCurry, Member at-Large, Chairperson

Dot Bailey, 4th Congressional district

Martha Brock, 5th congressional district

Burnet Mendelsohn, 1st congressional district

Louise McFarland, 2nd Congressional district

Vacant, 6th congressional district

Anne Thayer, 3rd congressional district

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## Voices for South Carolina's Children 2005 Policy Forum

by Denise Barker

Voices for SC's Children held their annual policy forum in Columbia on Thursday, November 3, 2005. This annual policy forum provides an opportunity to hear presentations related to child advocacy efforts in South Carolina, as well as specific legislative topics that will be followed by Voices during the upcoming legislative session. Of particular interest this year was a speaker from the Center for Social Policy in Washington, D.C. who addressed the need for South Carolina child advocates to collaborate on an effort to develop a "Children's Policy Agenda". Another interesting presentation was provided by a panel of legislators who addressed questions on the Medicaid waiver, raising the cigarette tax to fund Medicaid and four year old public kindergarten.

Special thanks to those local Board members who took advantage of the scholarships offered by Voices to attend: Scott Stephens – 10B, Jan Brown – 13B, Laurie Parks – 5E, Carolyn Dawkins – 7A, Weezie McFarland - 5A & State Board, Zora Massing – 7B, and Mary Ann Riley – 7B.



## South Carolina Heart Gallery

**By Robin Campbell and Stephen Clyburn, RB Project Administrators, and Millie Qualls RB Coordinator**



**(Pictured left: Millie Qualls, RB Coordinator, and Audra Brown, Photographer Liaison)**

The members of the Charleston County Review Boards came through in a big way to support the September 8, 2005 South Carolina Heart Gallery reception held at the Charleston County Public Library. The Charleston County Boards, like several boards around the state, established an account through the Charleston County Department of Social Services to meet any special material needs of children in foster care. The Charleston Board utilized over \$400 to fund the cost of matting and framing the 25 photos featuring 35 children from around South Carolina.

The inaugural South Carolina Heart Gallery was featured in the Summer 2005 edition of Advocates. The reception on September 8, 2005 was attended by more than 75 persons. Among the attendees at the reception was Claudia McKinney, the Vice-Chairperson of Review Board 9D. I would encourage other board members from around the state to participate in future Heart Gallery events in their area in the coming months. I want to thank all of the members of the Charleston Review Boards for their support and particularly the support of Jill Stevenson from Review Board 9C for her efforts to ensure that the funds were made available for this very worthwhile endeavor.

The opening reception for the SC Heart Gallery exhibition in Columbia was Thursday, November 3 at City Art. Thanks to the Region I Adoption Services staff and the contributions of professional photographers who donated their time and talents. A special thanks to City Art, 1224 Lincoln Street, in the Congaree Vista, for hosting the exhibition which will be open from November 1 - 30, 2005.

On November 1, 2005 The SC Heart Gallery website went "live". The site contains a gallery of photographs, news and upcoming events, information about the photographers and sponsors for the Gallery, and contact information for DSS. Check it out at: [www.scheartgallery.org](http://www.scheartgallery.org)



**Greenville photo shoot held at the rock quarry**



**National Heart Gallery - Washington, DC**

100 Heart Gallery photographs from over 30 states were selected for a two week display in Washington, DC during November 2005. Union Station and the Russell Senate Building house these exhibits. A reception honoring the photographers was held on November 1st.

Three photographs from the Charleston Heart Gallery in September were chosen to be in the national galleries in Washington, DC! The portrait of Antron and Darnell by Glenn Donaghy is displayed at Union Station. The portraits of Christopher and Daniel by Hansje Gold-Kruek and the photo of Shaketa and Shaquala by Jason Zwiker are displayed at the Russell Senate Building.

## Review Board Round-up

By Foster Care Review Board Coordinators and Project Administrators

- ◆ Review Board 1A provided clothes and school supplies to children in foster care. *Tomika Jackson*
- ◆ Review Board 2A opened a bank account to purchase items for foster children not funded by DSS. *Tomika Jackson*
- ◆ Review Board 4A provided backpacks for foster children in the county. *Amanda Reich*
- ◆ Review Board 4B gathered lists of items from their County DSS offices that each child needs upon entry to the system. *Anne Ochylski*
- ◆ Review Boards 7A and 7B are very active in attending Quarterly Meetings, Foster Parent Association Meetings, and Family Court Hearings. At times Board members have been called to testify. Review Board 7A collected book bags and school supplies for children in Spartanburg county. Review Board 7B collected school supplies for children in Cherokee county. Sissy Brock, State Board member, spoke to the Military Officer Association/Retired group and reported, "it was a great meeting, lots of interest". *Stephanie Spink*
- ◆ Review Boards 9B/9E opened a bank account to purchase items for foster children not funded by DSS. *Tomika Jackson*
- ◆ Review Board 13B members volunteered at the Fall for Greenville event held October 14-16th. The SC Foster Parents Association as one of the charities designated to share in the distribution of the profits from this year's event. The estimated number of people who attended was well over 100,000. As of this writing, the amount of the distribution for SCFPA is unknown. The key to obtaining these funds for the organization was the number of volunteers and hours worked at this event. Many thanks to Ron Rossi, RB 13B, for drumming up support for this event! *Millie Qualls*
- ◆ Review Board 15A collects clothing for children coming into care and provides birthday cakes for foster children. *Amanda Reich*
- ◆ Review Board 15B collected 20 book bags containing personal items for the children in the county. Nita Sparks and her husband Gene, are members of the Horry County Foster Parent's Association and report back to the local review board on important issues. *Mark Collins*
- ◆ Mattie Glenn, Review Board 16A, has spoken at several churches in Union County in an attempt to recruit foster families for DSS. *Mark Collins*

### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A REVIEW BOARD VOLUNTEER?

- ◆ You need to be at least 18 years of age and able to commit to spending one day per month reviewing cases. You will be given an opportunity to work with others in the child welfare system to bring about positive change for foster children.
- ◆ Each review board member is appointed by the Governor, upon the recommendation of legislative delegations, and is required to reside in the judicial district of the review board.
- ◆ For more information, call the Governor's Office Foster Care Review Program at 803-734-0480, or contact your local legislative delegation.

## Committed to Kids

### Welcome Review Board Members!

Nine new local review board members attended orientation training in October, along with one new foster care review staff member. Please welcome:

• Stephen Cramer	9C	Charleston
• Michelle Carnahan	15A	Georgetown
• Wayne Diehl	10C	Anderson
• Eugene Geer	9D	Charleston
• Lottie Miles	14B	Beaufort
• Walter Mitchell	9E	Berkeley
• Mary Morales	11A	Lexington
• Susan Shaw	5E	Kershaw
• Alyson Wissinger	6A	Chester

Orientation training is mandatory for all incoming board members and is offered at least four times each year. If you have review board members who have not completed this training, please encourage their attendance. Volunteer GALS and Guardian Ad Litem staff are welcome to attend; please call to reserve a space. The next session is scheduled for **January 9, 2006**.



**October 17, 2005 Orientation Training**  
Seated (left-right): Mary Morales, Susan Shaw, Michele Carnahan  
Standing (left-right): Anne Ochylski, RB Coordinator, Alyson Wissinger, Walter Mitchell, Eugene Geer, Stephen Cramer, Wayne Diehl, and Lottie Miles

## ***Foster Care Review News and Views: Local Review Board Member Survey***

*By Beth Green, Program Director*

Each year, Local Review Board members and staff are asked to complete a survey evaluating the status of the Foster Care Review Board. In September 2005, the annual survey was mailed to all 167 local review board members. 108 surveys were returned, an impressive 65% response rate! A special “pat on the back” to Review Boards 6A, 7A, 7B, 8A, 10C and 11A, as all members returned the 25 question survey. Survey results will be compiled and distributed in the weeks ahead. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important process.

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## ***Building Relationships with Foster Parents***

*By Stephen Clyburn, Program Supervisor*

Developing relationships with foster parent associations is one way to really make a difference for children and families. On Saturday, October 8, 2005 I met with the county presidents of the SC Foster Parent Association. I encouraged all of the Association Presidents to work closely with their local Review Boards, Guardian ad Litem and Department of Social Services through the regularly scheduled partners meetings. In addition, I asked that they encourage the members of their local associations to attend and participate in local Review Board meetings. As a result of this meeting, we are scheduled to meet with the Berkeley County Foster Parent Association in February 2006.

On October 10, 2005 Michelle Crowder, Bettye Rollison, Barbara Waters and I met with the Oconee Foster Parent Association and presented information regarding the role of the Foster Care Review Board. The foster parents were encouraged to be active participants in Review Board meetings and to work closely with their children’s Guardian ad Litem, local Review Board volunteers and staff, and the Department of Social Services to form alliances for the purpose of advocating more strongly for the needs of foster children in their community. The foster parents asked many questions about the foster care system and the foster parents’ commitment to the children in their homes was inspirational to our volunteers and staff. If you know of other foster parent associations that are interested in hearing more about the Foster Care Review Board, please contact me.

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## ***FOSTER FACTS***

*by Lisa Vosburgh, Data and Research Manager*

A HUGE thank you to ***Tonya Lewis, Anne Ochylski, and DeLisa Stallings*** for their help with this edition of the newsletter. Their writing and editing skills are very useful in the publishing process.

- The 2004 Review Board Annual Report and the 2004 Quality Assurance Review Program for Children in Medicaid-funded Placements Report are both now available on the web at [www.govoep.state.sc.us/children/foster.htm](http://www.govoep.state.sc.us/children/foster.htm).
- In September, new Gateway Tablet Laptops with mobile data capture software were delivered to the review board. A team of review board staff are now designing the first form and we hope to deploy it in the very near future. This is the first of many steps in the development a new data management system for the review board.
- The 2004 Facts About Foster Kids reports have been completed for the state and all 46 counties in SC. If you would like to receive a specific county report, please e-mail ([lsvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov](mailto:lsvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov)) or call me (803-734-0474). The reports will be available on the website by early 2006.
- The current foster care review board website is being re-designed. A new and improved website should be ready after the winter holidays.



# National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

By Tonya Lewis, Medicaid Review Specialist

On October 2, 2001, President Bush proclaimed October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. As citizens of South Carolina, we are very cognizant of the impact that domestic violence has on the children and families across our state. We see it on the news, read it in the newspapers and perhaps are even aware of neighbors, friends or family members who are struggling with this serious issue in their own household or the household of a loved one. As staff members and Board Members with the Division of Foster Care Review, we are constantly reminded of not only the magnitude of this problem in our communities but the lasting effects that violence has on children and their families.

In 2003, a report issued by the Office of the Attorney General in South Carolina indicated that there were more than 35,000 *reported* victims of domestic violence. (Imagine what this statistic would look like if ALL cases of criminal domestic violence were reported!) With the problem continuing to grow annually, we are compelled to find ways to combat this problem. The solution to domestic violence is easy – prevent it before it starts. The implementation of such a solution is where the difficulty lies. For many, domestic violence is a private matter between two individuals. This way of thinking only exacerbates the problem. In actuality, domestic violence is a community problem and eradicating it will require community action.

As members of our respective communities, we have a responsibility to advocate for stricter laws, expanded education about the causes and effects of domestic violence, training for professionals who deal with this issue and accessibility to services for all individuals who are victims of domestic violence. The truth is that domestic violence most often does not “take care of itself.” Quite the opposite. Once violence occurs in a relationship, it almost always reoccurs. The same can be said for violence in families. Research has shown that a strong predictor of domestic violence in adulthood is the presence of domestic violence in a household

where an individual was raised. This cycle from generation to generation is very hard to break because parents have presented this type of behavior and violence as being the norm. However, this cycle can be broken.

You do not have to look very far to find a wealth of information on criminal domestic violence statistics, psychological effects on victims and children who witness the violence, the rates of child abuse and neglect associated with domestic violence, etc. Equally and more importantly, there is a wealth of information on prevention and interventions related to domestic violence.

Facts about domestic violence...

- ◆ Each year there are 1,500,000 women and 834,700 men assaulted by an intimate partner. ([www.sccadvasa.org](http://www.sccadvasa.org))
- ◆ Intimate partner homicides account for 9% of homicides in the US annually. ([www.sccadvasa.org](http://www.sccadvasa.org))
- ◆ Every 12 seconds, a woman is beaten by her husband or boyfriend (American Institute on Domestic Violence, 2003)
- ◆ According to a recent American Bar Association report, an estimated 3.3 to 10 million children witness domestic violence annually.
- ◆ South Carolina ranks #6 in the nation for homicides of females committed by male offenders. ([www.sccadvasa.org](http://www.sccadvasa.org))
- ◆ Domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women age fifteen to forty-four. This is more common than auto accidents, mugging and cancer combined (US Surgeon General)

Domestic violence can be prevented. Ensuring that victims receive the services that they need and that children and adolescents are educated about violence in relationships can decrease the likelihood of domestic violence occurring. If you would like more information about domestic violence in South Carolina, check out <http://www.scattorneygeneral.org/public/women.php>, [www.thereisnoexcuse.org](http://www.thereisnoexcuse.org)

**South Carolina Governor's Office  
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## Review Board Calendar

National Adoption Awareness Month	Month of November	
SC Heart Gallery Reception	Thurs Nov 3	City Art Gallery Columbia
Veterans Day <b>STATE OFFICES CLOSED</b>	Friday Nov 11	
Thanksgiving Holidays <b>STATE OFFICES CLOSED</b>	Thursday Nov 24 and Friday 25	
Foster Care Review Chairperson's Training	Friday Dec 2	Columbia Conference Center
Christmas Holidays <b>STATE OFFICES CLOSED</b>	Monday Dec 26 and Tuesday Dec 27	
Foster Care Review New Member Orientation	Mon Jan 9	State Museum Columbia
Foster Care Review Certification Training	Friday Feb 3	Columbia Conference Center

All locations in Columbia, unless otherwise noted; times subject to change.  
Submissions are welcome; please direct them to the editor .

*Advocates* is published quarterly by the South Carolina Governor's Office. The deadline for submission of articles for the next issue of *Advocates* (Winter 2006) is January 18, 2006.

Anyone wishing to submit an article should contact *Advocates* editor Lisa Vosburgh. Call 803-734-0474, or send an e-mail to [lvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov](mailto:lvosburgh@oepp.sc.gov).

The publisher reserves the right to make the final determination as to the content of each issue. Articles submitted are subject to editing and are not guaranteed inclusion.

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